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NSC BRIEFING

8 December 1960

LAOS

- I. New "coup"--Laotian-style--took place in Vientiane in early hours of this morning.
- A. Details just now arriving and information skimpy and contradictory, but on surface would appear that takeover of Vientiane by Col. Kouprasith, Fifth Military Region commander, falls considerably short of General Phoumi's expectation of an anti-Souvanna Phouma coup.
1. Kouprasith earlier had formed secret alliance with Phoumi and the Savannakhet Revolutionary Committee for purpose of establishing what Phoumi and company thought would be rightist government in Vientiane.
- II. However, leaflets circulated by Kouprasith's troops after move began emphasize neutralist aims and need to unite country.
- A. Troops profess to be prepared to "devote our blood for the preservation of neutrality led by Prince Souvanna Phouma."
- B. At same time, leaflets state determination to "suppress the Pathet Lao rebels and young people's organizations" (a reference to leftist extremist groups who have intimidated government).
- III.
- V. Souvanna has informed Ambassador Brown that troops now in charge of Vientiane are loyal to him and equally ready to resist the Pathet Lao or Phoumi.

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State Dept. review completed

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- A. Souvanna urged that Phoumi be persuaded to stop his attacks to the east of Vientiane and suggested that talks between his government and Phoumi's group be held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.
- B. Souvanna said when "greater agreement" was reached, full dress conference could be held in Luang Prabang to reorganize government.
- V. Meanwhile, Phoumi's troops in the Ca Dinh area apparently are having some success in their action against government forces.
  - A. His forces have apparently taken Pak Ca Dinh and one unconfirmed report states they have occupied Pak Sane.
  - B. Kong Le's paratroopers, supported only by recruits and service troops, have sustained significant reverses by Lao standards in past week.
  - C. Pathet Lao, said to number about 500 in the general area of Ca Dinh, have not as yet played appreciable role in fighting. May, however, merely be lying low until favorable opportunity presents itself attack advancing Phoumi forces from rear.
- VI. Pro-Phoumi garrison in Luang Prabang reports Pathet patrols have recently been probing outer defenses royal capital.
  - A. Some possibility probes might encourage Pathets to try to take town, although it has been reenforced by Phoumi.
  - B. Souvanna government has been negotiating cease-fire in Phong Saly area; if successful would free Pathets for movement down Nam Hou River to join in attack on Luang Prabang.
  - C. Force Souvanna sent up to attack capital apparently still in Muong Kassy area. About half the force apparently neutralized by defection of its commander to Phoumi.

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